

# Vacaville Unified School District

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(707) 453-6100

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September 27, 2004

Peter B. Foor, Presiding Judge of the Superior Court  
c/o Superior Court Executive Office/Clerk of the Court  
Hall of Justice  
600 Union Avenue  
Fairfield, California 94533

Re: Response to 2003/04 Grand Jury Report

Dear Sir:

Please find the responses to the annual Grand Jury Report below:

### Findings and Recommendations

#### Hemlock Elementary School

Finding #1 – Most of the teaching staff is older, so there may be some retirements in the next few years.

Recommendation #1 – When new credentialed staff is needed, consider bringing in more bilingual teachers, not just to ease communication with students, but to encourage communication with non-English speaking parents.

District Response #1 – The District concurs. At the present time, all new staff members have been transferred from closed schools or call backs from lay-off lists.

Finding #2 – The school lacks good handicap access and places to display student work outside the classrooms.

Recommendation #2 – During the renovation process, ensure that handicap access is adequate and add additional bulletin board space in the common areas.

District Response #2 – During our current renovation project, all classrooms, restrooms, drinking fountains and doorways will be expanded and improved to include handicap access. The renovation project does not fund more outside display spaces. However, our renovated multipurpose room and offices will have more wall space for displays of student work. Additionally, classroom windows have been repaired and replaced, which should make more student work visible from the hallways.

### Findings and Recommendations

#### Will C. Wood High School

Finding #1 – The Library is closed to students during “instructional time” if no certificated person is available to supervise the library.

Recommendation #1 – Consider alternative ways to finance the hiring of additional certificated personnel to allow students more access time to the library.

District Response #1 – Due to the recent budget cuts, Will C. Wood High School no longer has a full time librarian. The school shares a librarian with Vacaville High School. In the past, teachers would occasionally send small groups of students to the library to work on a given assignment. They may still do this, but they have to adjust to the time the librarian is on site, as the Education Code requires that a certificated staff member supervise students. It should be noted that the library is a busy place. Teachers can and do bring their students to the library to work on special class projects. Because of this teachers sign up to use the library weeks in advance. The library can accommodate a maximum of three classes at a time. It is also important to note that the adjacent Career Center is also available for student use. There is a full time certificated staff member as well as a full time classified member there and students do use that facility all day long.

The district is steadfastly seeking ways to support our libraries. The Vacaville Public Education Foundation has become a partner in this effort. As the economy improves and funds become available to our education system we will be able to have the full time librarian and thus the extended access to the library our students so richly deserve.

Finding #2 – The gymnasium was found to be very dark due to ceiling lights not working even though requests had been submitted for repair. Lack of adequate lighting is a potential safety hazard.

Recommendation #2 – The District should devise a more timely system to respond to work order from school sites.

District Response #2 – The lighting system that was installed in the gymnasium has never provided optimum lighting. This is an item that will be addressed in the modernization process that is scheduled to begin the summer of 2005. The maintenance department responds very quickly to routine work orders.

Finding #3 – The Grand Jury observed there is only one ramp for physically challenged persons in the main quad. The ramp is located on the left side of the quad as you enter from the parking lot. It creates a long trip to get to the opposite side of the campus. There are ramps on the outside area to access the wings on the left and right sides but it forces those who need ramps to go out and around the buildings.

Recommendation #3 – Improve access to all campus areas for everyone.

District Response #3 – This item will get a lot of attention during the modernization project. It should be noted that the design of the building itself requires everyone to walk great distances to access the building from the parking lot. There are access roads on the east and the west side of the building that allows individuals with disability to get closer to the core facilities.

Finding #4 – Two out of three sinks were missing from a girls' restroom.

Recommendation #4 – Replace the missing sinks in the restrooms.

District Response #4 – The sinks have been replaced.


Finding #5 – At the time of the Grand Jury visit there was no certified instructor for the auto shop class.

Recommendation #5 – Provide an instructor for the class

District Response #5 – The auto shop teacher made the decision to take a year's leave of absence late in the summer. Efforts to secure an instructor for the class were extensive, and included posting the position on the Internet, but the school was not been successful. Individuals with those skills are not willing to leave their present position for a long-term substitute assignment. The school continues to search for a credentialed candidate for this position.

If you need further information, please do not hesitate to contact me at (707) 453-6100.

Sincerely,

  
John T. Aycock  
Superintendent

JTA:jw

cc: Tom Davis, Hemlock Elementary School Principal  
Enriqueta Newland, Wood High School Principal  
County Administrator's Office (courtesy copy)  
Clerk of the Board of Supervisors (courtesy copy)